

## 2.10 GAINING MOMENTUM: LOBBYING FOR CHANGE

**Essential Question(s):** How do lobbyists impact the democratic process? What are effective ways of lobbying? How might I lobby for my bill?

### Overview

“Lobbying” is an effort by individuals and groups to influence government decisions and actions, and specifically the writing of laws. Lobbying can take different forms including writing letters, making phone calls to legislators and meeting with people in the administration. As student activism in the U.S. increases, it will benefit young people to understand what lobbying is, and how to effectively lobby for the issues that they are passionate about.

### Snapshot

**What Students Will Learn:**

In this lesson, students will learn about advocacy and how to effectively lobby for a bill.

**Standard(s):**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6

**Time:** 50 minutes



## Objectives

- Explain what lobbying is and its effect on the democratic process.
- Lobby for their bill.

## Differentiation

As an assessment, students will be asked to choose a teacher or other educator in the building they feel comfortable “lobbying” on their specific issue. With ample time ahead of the lesson, inform staff colleagues that students will be making this request, and potentially make a list of willing staff members to share with students. For students who need additional support, consider pairing them with another student.

## What’s Needed

- Writing utensil or 1:1 technology
- Chart paper or board/smart board
- Four large pieces of chart paper and markers
- Prepare the definitions in step #6 as a student handout or as a slide to be projected for whole class viewing.
- Make copies of the handouts “[Lobbying for Change](#)” and “[Lobbying Assessment](#),” one of each for each student.

## Classroom Setup

Students will collaborate and move around the room in small groups. Seating should be set up to best support collaboration and ease of moving. Identify four stations where students will sit. Before class, create four posters by writing the following terms at the top of separate pieces of large chart paper: LOBBYIST/LOBBYING, INTEREST GROUPS, COMMUNITY ADVOCATES, POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (PACS). Hang a poster at each station.

## Direct Teaching

1. Start class by asking students to reflect in their notebook about some of the things they do, their friends do, or their family members/caretakers do to persuade someone to get something they want.  
Have them share out some of those ideas, and record them on a chart paper or board/smart board.

## Key Vocabulary

community advocates  
interest groups  
lobbying  
lobbyist  
political action  
committees (PACS)



2. Assign students to one of four groups identified by the station posters. The groups will rotate from station to station during the carousel activity.
3. Once students have arrived at their starting station, they should self-assign a recorder and a timekeeper within their groups. If possible, have students change roles within their groups four times throughout the carousel activity.
4. Explain to students they will travel together in their small groups to each of the four stations in the carousel. At each station, students will have two minutes to collaborate and define the term written at the top of the station poster. They can write down anything that comes to mind about the word—synonyms, antonyms, adjectives, places they have heard the word, etc. Students can also draw pictures if it helps them to process the terms.

Further explain that they are to write on the poster in a way that leaves room below for other groups to add to the definitions on the poster as they move from station to station.

Allow 15 minutes for this process.

**Note:** Students should not access a dictionary for this activity. Instead, they should draw from their own experiences and exposure to these terms. If groups are struggling, consider using the term in a sentence that has context clues.

5. After students have completed the carousel activity, have one student from each group summarize and share out what they see and talked about at their current station.
6. Then, provide students with the following definitions, either on a handout or projected:

**Lobbyist** is a person who engages in lobbying, which is trying to influence a politician or public official on a certain issue.

**Interest Groups** are groups of people who share a common interest and work together to protect and/or promote their interest by influencing the government.

**Community Advocates** operate on a local or state level and raise money to influence elections or legislation.

**Political Action Committee (PAC)** is an organization that raises money to influence elections or legislation. They raise money privately and focus primarily on federal level legislation.

Allow a few moments for students to make connections between the definitions and the brainstorming they did on the posters.

7. Explain that all of these terms relate to lobbying.

Lobbying is an activity engaged in by individual lobbyists who may be working for a larger network of interest groups. Lobbyists often approach politicians to advocate for the passage of a bill.

Political Action Committees, or PACS, are often formed to provide funding for political campaigns. They are connected to lobbying in that they fund the candidates that support a particular issue being lobbied.

States do not have official lobbyists; instead they have “community advocates” who are like lobbyists. These people join interest groups that would like to see change in their State or community.

8. Share with students that lobbying can take many different forms. It can look like writing letters, signing petitions, speaking with others about the topic and much more.
9. Facilitate a brief discussion by asking:
  - Where have students heard any of these terms before?

- Does the word lobbyist sound positive, negative, neutral?
- What are some possible negative and positive aspects of lobbying?"

**Note:** Students may ask where the term “lobbying” comes from. While there are different stories, the general idea is that, back in the 1800s, those seeking to influence lawmakers would wait in the lobbies of government buildings or hotels to persuade the lawmakers to do something in their favor.

10. Distribute the “Lobbying for Change” handout. Read through it with your students.

Explain that lobbying can have negative effects such as exerting influence that is one-sided, often in favor of those with more resources, because lobbying can depend on whether an organization/special interest group has the funds to hire a lobbyist.

But effective lobbying can also inform and convince our representatives about a critical issue. Much of the legislation that is passed is due to lobbying. And being an effective lobbyist means you are able to concisely and convincingly advocate that supporting your position on an issue will have a significant impact.

11. Explain to students that they will lobby for the Bill they drafted in previous lessons.
12. For the rest of class time, have students prepare an “elevator speech” about their bill. They should be prepared to defend their position and the Bill’s objectives. Provide the following example of an “elevator speech”:

*I’m \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ group. Thank you for meeting with me. I’m seeking your support for the Coloring Book Bill introduced by Chancellor Jonathan Bennett. The bill requires coloring books be provided in all high schools. The bill will be funded by the Illinois Department of Education based on our finding that coloring books can be purchased for \$1.00 per student. Research has shown that coloring decreases stress and anxiety, increases student engagement and is linked to better test scores on standardized tests. I would like you to sponsor this bill.*

13. Ask students, “Why might it be called an ‘elevator speech’?” Accept any responses.

Explain that an “elevator speech” is a short, 60-second speech that can be said in the time of an elevator ride. It is essential to be succinct and provide the most important information quickly since you may not have much time with a Representative. Students should be prepared to defend their position and the Bill’s objectives as well as answer any questions from their Representative.

You can also ask students to consider that in this elevator pitch the Lobbyist put the information in a particular order. Then ask students, “Would you have mentioned the funding before the research?”

14. Distribute the “Lobbying Assessment” handout. Explain to students they are to use this handout as a guide to scheduling their lobbying meeting and to assess the meeting after completion. Students should reference the “Lobbying for Change” handout as they prepare to lobby for the Bill they drafted. Explain to students they are to turn in their Lobbying Assessment upon completion.

**Note:** The “Lobbying Assessment” serves as a final assessment for Unit 2, “Constitution.” However, if you are using this as a stand-alone lesson to introduce students to lobbying, then the “Lobbying Assessment” is an opportunity for students to practice the communication and organization skills involved in lobbying. They can choose a position on an issue that would affect their school community.

15. Distribute to your students the list of teachers and school staff members who are willing to be Representatives and support this assessment.

**Note:** As the basis for their Representative Reflection, share the “Lobbying for Change” handout with the school community members other than yourself who will be assessing the effectiveness of your students as lobbyists.

## Closing

Have students write down the “Representative” they would like to lobby about their Bill. Remind them it can be you, or someone from the list you handed out. Have students reflect back on the journal prompt at the start of class. Ask, “Which of the ‘tools of persuasion’ would be effective for lobbyists, and for your lobbying work to pass your bill?”

# LOBBYING FOR CHANGE



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## Preparing for Your Lobby Meetings

Face-to-face meetings with Representatives and their staff are critical to advocacy success. This sample agenda can help you plan an efficient and effective meeting.

- 1 Introduce yourself, your group, your mission and thank them for meeting with you. Highlight examples of the programs and impact that the Bill will have in your community. Remember to keep your discussion brief.
- 2 Ask your representative to support your Bill.

To wrap up, summarize your understanding of

- 3 the Representative's positions, thank them for the meeting and encourage them to follow up with you for additional resources.
- 4 Follow up with a personal note or email.

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## Lobbying 101: Tips for Effective Meetings

### Advance Preparation

Read about your Representative and his or her record on the issues. Plan your "pitch" (60-second "elevator speech") and designate participant speaking roles with your group ahead of time.

### At the Meeting

Stay focused and be brief. Save time to listen to the Representative's views on each issue. Treat staff as you would the Member. They are the Representative's "eyes and ears" and have their trust. Describe local support for the issues and support from coalition allies in your state. Request a specific action of support on each issue.

### If the Representative *Agrees*...

Thank them for their support and let them know that they can contact you at any time as a resource.

### If the Representative *Disagrees*...

Hear them out respectfully and agree to stay in touch. Depending on the situation and the person, you can also decide to provide more information and try to persuade them to change their mind.

### Continue the Conversation through Future Engagement

Send a thank you email to your Representative. Follow your Representative on social media. Write letters to other Representatives to introduce them to the information. Organize more people to meet with Representatives.

# LOBBYING ASSESSMENT

**Directions:** Using the “Lobbying for Change” handout, follow the instructions below to schedule and complete your lobby meeting and then, assess the meeting. Turn in this assessment to your teacher upon completion.

## Schedule and Meet with Your Representative

### Who’s My Representative?

The Representative you are going to be speaking with is either your teacher or another school community member who can meet with you in the school building and who you chose from the list provided by your teacher.

### Steps for a Successful Meeting

1. Schedule a time to meet with your Representative. Explain that you only need 10 minutes with them to explain a Bill that you would like to see pass for the school community.
2. Prepare your 60-second “elevator speech” about your Bill. Make extra copies of your Bill to take to the meeting.
3. Arrive on time to your meeting. Introduce yourself and your Bill. Provide the Representative with a copy of the Bill and allow them a few extra minutes at the beginning of the meeting to read it.
4. Talk through your Bill with your Representative using your “elevator speech.”
5. Thank them and follow up if needed.

## Assess Your Lobby Meeting

### Part 1. Student Reflection (Answer each question in 3–5 complete sentences.)

What went well during your lobby meeting?

What could have gone better during your lobby meeting?

Do you feel confident that your Representative is continuing to think about your Bill?

**Part 2. Representative Reflection (Answer each question in 3–5 complete sentences.)**

What did the student do well during the lobby meeting?

Did they have a short elevator speech about their Bill?

Did they leave you thinking more about the Bill and the school issues?

Would you sponsor this Bill as a Representative?